

Frequently Asked Questions

Travel during a Government Shutdown (2014)

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1 TDY Travel Question

- 1.1 What if I am funded by permanent funding or carryover funding and my function is continued in the case of a shut down. Can I travel?

Yes. You can continue your travel if your salary and the travel expenses are funded by a non-lapsing appropriation. Your supervisor will provide you with more guidance on whether or not you should continue travel.

- 1.2 What if I am an excepted employee? Can I travel?

You may continue to travel if the purpose of the travel is to perform excepted duties related to the protection of life and property. If the purpose of your travel is not for such excepted duties, you must return home before a lapse in appropriations, if possible.

- 1.3 What if I am Traveling on Reimbursable/No Year Money? Do I still have to return home?

If your salary is paid from a lapsing appropriation but your travel is being paid from a non-lapsing appropriation, you will still be expected to return home unless your travel is for an excepted activity that is authorized to continue notwithstanding a lapse of appropriations. Your supervisor will direct you to make arrangements with the Department travel management center (TMC) that ticketed your transportation mode to return back to your official duty station prior to a lapse in appropriations, if possible. For all bureaus, with the exception of the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR), the TMC's will be either Duluth Travel or El Sol. BOR will continue to use SATO as their TMC until October 20, 2013. After October 20, 2013, BOR will use Duluth Travel and El Sol for all required travel fulfillment needs.

- 1.4 What if my travel is being paid by another Federal Agency's appropriated funding? Do I still have to return home?

If your salary is paid from a lapsing appropriation but your travel is being paid from a non-lapsing appropriation, you will still be expected to return home unless your travel is for an excepted activity that is authorized to continue notwithstanding a lapse of appropriations. Your supervisor will direct you to make arrangements with the Department TMC that ticketed your transportation mode to return back to your official duty station prior to a lapse in appropriations, if possible. For all bureaus, with the exception of the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR), the TMC's will be either Duluth Travel or El Sol. BOR will continue to use SATO as their

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TMC until October 20, 2013. After October 20, 2013, BOR will use Duluth Travel and El Sol for all required travel fulfillment needs.

- 1.5 Am I allowed to stay at my TDY location for a day or so, in case the shutdown is resolved quickly and it would cost more in airfare for me to return?

No. It is a violation of the Anti-Deficiency Act to work when there is no appropriated funding available. By remaining on TDY you are acting in an official capacity. You must return immediately if the Federal Government is shutdown. For all bureaus, with the exception of the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR), return travel arrangement will be made through the TMC's Duluth Travel or El Sol. BOR will continue to use SATO as their TMC until October 20, 2013. After October 20, 2013, BOR will use Duluth Travel and El Sol for all required travel fulfillment needs.

- 1.6 Will I still be paid per diem if my travel day is the Saturday after a lapse in appropriations?

No. Travel expenses may not be paid for periods of time that are not covered by appropriated funding. You should return to your official duty station no later than the date the appropriation is due to lapse. For all bureaus, with the exception of the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR), return travel arrangement will be made through the TMC's Duluth Travel or El Sol. BOR will continue to use SATO as their TMC until October 20, 2013. After October 20, 2013, BOR will use Duluth Travel and El Sol for all required travel fulfillment needs.

- 1.7 What if I already purchased a non-refundable ticket for the week of the shutdown? Should I just document the cancellation on my charge card statement? How do I re-book the unused portion in the future?

If your purchase of non-refundable airfare was approved by your supervisor on your authorization, you would have to cancel the ticket as you would not be able to travel during a government shutdown. On your charge card statement, you would show that the trip was cancelled, because of lapse of Federal Appropriation, due to the government shutdown. You would detail the dates of the work stoppage and the dates of your official trip.

The airline will charge a cancellation fee; typically \$200 will be applied to your government charge card for canceling the ticket. The same explanation should be furnished on your charge card statement for this transaction.

If you are making travel arrangements during any future continuing resolutions, you should use fully refundable General Services Administration (GSA) contract city pair fares to mitigate the risk of airline cancellation fees.

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You may use the airline ticket voucher that will be issued to you for future TDY travel. These arrangements may be made with the airline or by calling the Department TMC. For all bureaus, with the exception of the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR), return travel arrangement will be made through the TMC's Duluth Travel or El Sol. BOR will continue to use SATO as their TMC until October 20, 2013. After October 20, 2013, BOR will use Duluth Travel and El Sol for all required travel fulfillment needs.

- 1.8 If I am on TDY travel and the government shuts down, will I be immediately returned home, or can I continue to receive per diem during the shutdown?

You must immediately return home. Due to lapse in appropriation, you may not receive per diem during a government shutdown. Return travel arrangements should be made directly with the Department TMC. For all bureaus, with the exception of the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR), return travel arrangement will be made through the TMC's Duluth Travel or El Sol. BOR will continue to use SATO as their TMC until October 20, 2013. After October 20, 2013, BOR will use Duluth Travel and El Sol for all required travel fulfillment needs.

- 1.9 Do I need to be categorized as an "excepted employee" in order to continue to receive per diem during the shutdown?

Non-excepted employees may not travel during a government shutdown. However, if already on official travel, the non-excepted employees must return to their official duty station as they may not be compensated without a continuing resolution or an appropriation in place.

Excepted employees, who must travel, in order to perform excepted duties, may do so if approved by their supervisor.

- 1.10 If the government shuts down and I cannot leave for TDY but I have already ticketed my travel, will I be refunded for airline tickets and lodging?

All official travel reservations for non-excepted personnel should be cancelled if a government shutdown is announced. If you purchased refundable airline tickets, the cost of the airfare will be fully credited to your government charge card.

Travelers should immediately contact the Department TMC to cancel their lodging reservations if there is a government shutdown. The limited lodging reservations that are made directly with the lodging establishment should also be cancelled with the establishment.

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For all bureaus with the exception of the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) lodging cancellations will be made through the TMC's Duluth Travel or El Sol. BOR will continue to use SATO as their TMC until October 20, 2013. After October 20, 2013, BOR will use Duluth Travel and El Sol for all required lodging cancellations.

- 1.11 For conferences and foreign travel previously approved by the Department, will they be cancelled or curtailed by the Department if they occur during the shutdown period?

Travelers attending conferences and performing foreign travel should be directed to return to their official duty station immediately in the event of a government shutdown. For all bureaus, with the exception of the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR), return travel arrangement will be made through the TMC's Duluth Travel or El Sol. BOR will continue to use SATO as their TMC until October 20, 2013. After October 20, 2013, BOR will use Duluth Travel and El Sol for all required travel fulfillment needs.

- 1.12 Are non-employee invitational travelers by definition "non-excepted personnel" or can the bureau designate them excepted personnel if, for example, they are leading a seminar?

It is highly unlikely that any invitational travelers will be deemed "excepted." Any such determination will be made on a case-by-case basis as far in advance of the appropriations lapse, as possible. All non-excepted travelers should be directed to return to their official duty station or residence in the event of a government shutdown. For all bureaus, with the exception of the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR), return travel arrangement will be made through the TMC's Duluth Travel or El Sol. BOR will continue to use SATO as their TMC until October 20, 2013. After October 20, 2013, BOR will use Duluth Travel and El Sol for all required travel fulfillment needs.

- 1.13 What if my travel is being paid by a non-federal source? Do I still have to return home?

Yes. Although the travel may be paid by a non-federal source, if you are a non-excepted employee, your salary is paid by a lapsing appropriation. For all bureaus, with the exception of the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR), return travel arrangement will be made through the TMC's Duluth Travel or El Sol. BOR will continue to use SATO as their TMC until October 20, 2013. After October 20, 2013, BOR will use Duluth Travel and El Sol for all required travel fulfillment needs.

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1.14 Do I have to come home on the next available flight if a shutdown is announced?

In case of an expected lapse of funding, you must make arrangements to return immediately. Your supervisor will provide you with more guidance on whether or not you should continue travel. For all bureaus, with the exception of the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR), return travel arrangement will be made through the TMC's Duluth Travel or El Sol. BOR will continue to use SATO as their TMC until October 20, 2013. After October 20, 2013, BOR will use Duluth Travel and El Sol for all required travel fulfillment needs.

1.15 What if the next available flight is scheduled to fly on Saturday, will I get paid for my travel time (i.e. salary) on Saturday?

No. Salary or comp time cannot be earned during a lapse of appropriations for non-excepted employees. All return travel should be made in the days prior to the event of a Government shutdown. Any travel made afterwards, is not eligible for salary compensation.

1.16 If I am on extended TDY, what shall I do in the event of a Government shutdown?

You should make all arrangements to return to your official duty station, as soon as possible, before a lapse in appropriations.

1.17 Should I be arranging official travel for dates after a potential lapse in appropriations?

You should delay making arrangements for official travel scheduled to occur after a potential lapse in appropriations. If directed by your supervisor to perform official travel, airline reservations should be made using the fully refundable GSA contract city pair fare. Lodging should be reserved using the GSA Fedrooms rates, as Fedrooms allow for same day cancellation.

1.18 Can we continue to make travel reservations?

You should avoid making travel reservations during this time. If a continuing resolution or an appropriation is passed, you may then book travel, as needed. If you are making travel arrangements during any future continuing resolutions, you should use fully refundable GSA contract city pair airfares and Fedrooms for lodging.

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- 1.19 What if I am traveling or supervise someone who has traveled to a remote area without access to communications equipment? What are employees who are in this type of travel situation to do?

Prior to travel, employees should be counseled to stay in touch with the office and be informed of the procedures to follow in the event of a Government shutdown. For employees, who are already on travel, every practical effort should be made to contact these individuals. Messages should be left at the predetermined locations to notify the individual to cease travel, if they are designated as non-excepted personnel.

2 PCS Questions

- 2.1 Can a relocating or newly hired employee perform en route travel during a Government shutdown?

No, an employee or new hire will not be able to perform en route travel during a government shutdown as the individual would not be eligible for the reimbursement of hours spent during an official en route trip.

- 2.2 Would employees currently in temporary quarters still be entitled to receive temporary quarter's subsistence expense reimbursement?

If you are currently in temporary quarters, at either your old or new duty station, you will be eligible for per diem if your relocation expenses are already obligated, which is generally the case.

- 2.3 Can an employee's household goods be picked up and/or delivered during this time?

Yes. The pick up or delivery of household goods is not dependent upon compensating the employee for time as employees are not eligible for reimbursement of hours spent while they oversee the packing and unpacking of their household goods.

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- 2.4 If the Government shuts down during my PCS move, does anything (like house hunting trip, en route travel, and temporary quarters) get curtailed? Can I be kicked out of temporary quarters?

Employees who are authorized relocation expenses must delay any en route travel or house hunting trips until there is appropriated funding available to reimburse hours incurred during their trips.

Prior to an employee move certain authorized PCS expenses are financially obligated and available for reimbursement. Employees are eligible for temporary quarters reimbursement as the payment of temporary quarters is not contingent upon the paying the employee for hours worked and it is pre-obligated.